



Naomi Klein: Unifor will be on the frontlines in the fight for the future
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Also inside: Meet your Unifor National Executive Board

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FOUNDING CONVENTION ISSUE



Founding Unifor National President Jerry Dias hugs his partner Leslie, after being elected to lead Canada's newest union.

Dias: "We will build a better society for all"

Founding Unifor National President Jerry Dias launched Unifor Labour Day weekend with a rousing keynote speech to the new union's founding convention that linked the dreams of Canadians for a better life with

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Unifor is born Labour Day Weekend

It is appropriate that on the Saturday of Labour Day weekend, thousands of union activists from across Canada approved the formation of Unifor, a union for everyone.

There were so many on hand to witness the historic event — more than 4,000 in all — that a spill over room had to be found at the last minute to accommodate everyone.

Thousands more watched the convention through online livestreaming.

The delegates voted almost 96 per cent in favour of the new constitution, which creates the foundation for Unifor, a new national union that represents 300,000 working Canadians.

When the vote result was announced the members leapt to their feet and the hall erupted into cheers of "Unifor! Unifor!" Former CAW National President Ken Lewenza thanked the delegates for their vision

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Unifor launches major organizing drive

Improving the lives of unorganized workers must be a top priority of Unifor, delegates to the union's founding convention Labour Day weekend said as they unanimously

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#Unifor

Here's a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@TimmyB707

@NaomiAKlein "We need truth so powerful that their lies dissolve on contact." @UniforTheUnion Founding Convention #Unifor #cdnpoli

@rabbleca

"If they are good enough to work here they are good enough to stay here permanently," @oliviachow on migrant workers #Unifor

Naomi Klein urges Unifor to take action on climate change and free trade

Activist and author Naomi Klein inspired the founding members of Unifor on Sunday to take the momentum of their Labour Day weekend to go forward and work for a better Canada.

“The creation of Unifor, and your promise of reviving social unionism — building not just a big union but a vast and muscular network of social movements — has raised so much hope,” said Klein.

Klein is an award-winning journalist, syndicated columnist and author of two international best sellers: *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* and *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*.

Referring to powerful movements such as Occupy, the Québec student movement and Idle No More, Klein urged members to continue to support and build these movements.

“These social movements need you — they need your institutional strength, your radical history, and perhaps most of all, your ability to act as an anchor so that we don’t keep rising up and disappearing again.”

Klein commended Unifor for the ground-breaking idea of community chapters — an initiative that will transform who



Naomi Klein gave an inspiring speech at the Unifor convention.

can be a union member. Through the community chapters, groups will be able to work together, pool resources, and win common battles.

Klein spoke at length about climate change and the need for a democratically controlled, de-centralized energy system operated in the public interest. Klein also declared that it is time to stop so-called free trade agreements and to protect good Canadian jobs.

“You will be on the frontlines on the fight for the future, and everyone else — including the opposition parties — will have to follow or be left behind,” said Klein.

Unifor is Canada’s newest union and the largest private sector union in the country. With more than 300,000 members Unifor will be a force to be reckoned with. 

Kennedy: “Hope and optimism”



Peter Kennedy was elected Secretary-Treasurer of Unifor.

All involved in building Unifor were committed to making it a union addressing the challenges faced by working people today and return hope to our communities, Unifor

Secretary-Treasurer Peter Kennedy says.

“The status quo wasn’t good enough,” Kennedy told the founding convention of Unifor Labour Day weekend.

Kennedy said that Unifor was founded on strong principles of equity and reflecting the diversity of Canada and the Unifor membership.

“We are here today full of hope and optimism.”

Kennedy, who was Secretary-Treasurer of CAW, began his career in the labour movement after starting work at 3M Canada in London, Ontario in 1972 where he was a member of CAW Local 27.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Kennedy was elected to various in-plant and local union executive positions. In 1989, he was appointed director of the

union’s education department. Later he was appointed assistant to then National Secretary-Treasurer Jim O’Neil in 1992.

“The best vehicle for working people anywhere is a good trade union movement,” Kennedy told the Unifor convention.

Kennedy led the 22-month process of bringing CAW and CEP together, working in partnership with former CEP Secretary-Treasurer Gaétan Ménard .

“Peter and I met with thousands of workers,” Ménard said.

“What I saw in the eyes of those workers was hope.” 

Members approve Unifor vision and plan



Jim Stanford and Fred Wilson presented the vision paper.

Unifor adopted a bold vision for the future during its founding convention Labour Day weekend, with delegates voting unanimously to accept the policy paper that outlines the new union's vision for

the future.

"Our first priority coming out of this founding convention must be to build Unifor into the great new Canadian union we envision," the vision paper read.

Delegates were presented with the paper "A New Union for a Challenging World: Unifor's Vision and Plan."

Introduced by former CEP Assistant to the President Fred Wilson

and Unifor Economist Jim Stanford, the paper details the six main strategies for Unifor: building the union; organizing; bargaining effectively; defending labour rights; taking our voice to the community and politics; and building the labour movement.

Delegates spoke about how important the paper was and the need for using the vision and strategies to fight back against the attacks on the labour movement. Fred Wilson noted that, "How we respond to this fight is critical for our future. Labour rights are, in fact, human rights." 

Georgetti: "Unifor has arrived just in time"

Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti presented Unifor with its founding charter on Labour Day weekend, saying the new union will be a positive force for improving the lives of all Canadians.

"This is truly a day of celebration," Georgetti said as he welcomed Unifor as the newest affiliate of the CLC. "The Canadian Labour Congress is behind you and Unifor."

With the labour movement facing many challenges from companies and governments who want to take away bargaining rights and tie the hands of unions in red tape, Georgetti said unions and other progressive groups will need to work together.

"We're facing ongoing attacks from the federal conservatives and several right-wing provincial governments."

Engaging members with their unions and linking their well-being to their unions will be key to that effort, he said.

"We have to get people thinking about this as "my" union. We need to get them prepared for the attack that is coming," Georgetti said.

Over a lifetime, being part of a union puts more than \$600,000 in the pockets of unionized workers over what they would have earned without a union, he said. "That's better than buying lottery tickets."



Ken Georgetti, centre, presented Unifor with its charter.

And that's money spent in their communities within 10 days of earning it, he said, citing a recent CLC study, boosting local economies and employing more people.

"It is the job of the labour movement to make sure Canadians understand the advantage of being in a union, so the labour movement can grow. And Unifor will be key to making that happen," he said.

"Unifor has arrived, I think, just in time." 

Your Unifor National Executive Board

National President: *Jerry Dias*
Secretary Treasurer: *Peter Kennedy*
Québec Director: *Michel Ouimet*
Transition Officer: *Gaéтан Ménard*

To reflect its diversity, and provide regional and sectoral balance, the following leaders were also elected to the union's first National Executive Board:

Lana Payne, *Atlantic Director*
Katha Fortier, *Ontario Director*
Scott Doherty, *Western Director*
Penny Fawcett, *Atlantic Chair*
Marcel Rondeau, *Québec Chair*
Dino Chiodo, *Ontario Chair*
Christy Best, *Prairie Chair*
Andrea MacBride, *B.C. Chair*
Heather Grant, *Transportation*
Jean-Pierre Lafond, *Forestry*
Randy Kitt, *Media*

Christine Connor, *Retail*
Angela Adams, *Energy*
Gary Beck, *Auto*
Marc Rousseau, *Communications*
Roland Kiehne, *Manufacturing*
Nancy McMurphy, *Health Care*
Earle McCurdy, *Resource*
Cheryl Robinson, *Service*
Ruth Pryce, *Aboriginal and Racialized Workers*
Dave Cassidy, *Skilled Trades*
Len Harrison, *Retiree Chair*



Ouimet: "With every victory, we build Unifor"

Unifor is much more than a bringing together of two great unions, but is a new kind of union, newly elected Québec Director Michel Ouimet says.

"It's not enough to be bigger, you have to be better," Ouimet told the Unifor founding convention.

Ouimet, who was executive vice-president for Québec in the old Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union, began his career as a data technician at Bell Canada in 1973 and became active in his union three years later.

From steward to chief steward, vice-president and then president of Local 84Q, Ouimet became a national representative in 1987, and was put in charge of organizing drives and services to local unions in the industrial and manufacturing sector. He was elected executive vice-president for Québec in 2000, in charge of the communications, media and industrial sectors.

In his address to the Unifor convention, Ouimet said the new union will be a positive force for change in Canada and Québec, working to improve the lives of all Canadians and building hope for the future.

"We have to make a difference. Unifor will make a difference," Ouimet said.

"With each victory, we will build Unifor."



Former CAW Québec director Sylvain Martin called Unifor "the House of Labour" and reflected on the importance of the Unifor founding convention, the largest-ever labour meeting in Canada.

"We are making a historic act, that is to create a new union, Unifor," Martin said. "We will be a strong voice for the members we will represent so they have security and dignity in their workplace." 



Labour Day parades were a sea of Unifor red.

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to change.

Those delegates were, on Friday, members of their respective unions — the CAW and the CEP. At special conventions for each union on Friday the members approved a merger into Unifor.

Prior to the vote on the Unifor constitution the members of CAW and CEP had to be admitted into the new union as per the articles

of the soon-to-be adopted Unifor constitution.

Delegates, officers, staff and guests signed their founding member application forms as the new union became a legal entity.

On Sunday, everyone who signed an application was given a bright red Unifor founding member card.

Within minutes, the union’s first members were signing their union cards and posting pictures of themselves signing them online. **U**

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passed Unifor’s organizing policy.

National President Jerry Dias said organizing is a challenge but it’s imperative to immediately target young people to give them hope and opportunity.

John Aman, organizing director of the former CAW, said that the Unifor policy is designed to give financial resources to

organizing. Duncan Brown, Organizing Director of the former CEP noted that strong local unions are imperative and must have an active role in organizing.

Convention delegates spoke about the need to go after those groups of marginalized workers in precarious work who needed to be in Unifor: retailers workers, hotel workers and all those people who don’t enjoy the benefits of having a union.

The detailed policy paper, “Unifor Organizing Policy,” shows how Unifor must organize strategically to build power and use resources wisely for the benefit of all workers. **U**

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international struggles.

Unifor, he said, will be a positive force in Canada and Québec.

“It’s time to start making better choices. It’s time to stop reacting and time to start setting the agenda,” Dias said.

Dias was elected the first president of Unifor Saturday afternoon.

“I am immensely honoured and humbled to be elected as the founding president of Unifor. I understand the challenge that has been given to me. But I am excited and energized by this responsibility.”

Dias traces his union roots to the de Havilland Aircraft plant (now Bombardier Aerospace) in 1978, signing up as a CAW shop steward shortly after

starting work at the plant. Before long, he was plant chair, then local president before becoming a national representative.

Dias thanked his mother and father, both union activists, and his wife and children for their support.

“I thank my family, for the strength and support they have given me. I couldn’t do this without you!”

Before being elected president of Unifor, Dias was assistant to the National President at the CAW, one of the two founding unions of Unifor with the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada.

Dias told the 4,000 delegates, guests and observers to the convention that joining the two unions is about much more than just getting bigger. The idea, he said, was to build

a movement that will work on behalf of all Canadians toward a more equitable society.

“We are a social union. We fight for better lives for workers. And in so doing, we will build a better society for all,” Dias said.

The father of four said all parents want to raise their children in the hope that they will have a better life than they did, and Unifor will make sure that is a real possibility again.

“We want a Canada that treats every person with decency, respect, and security. A Canada that values the workers who produce the wealth – rather than devaluing and sacrificing us. A Canada that builds and shares a commonwealth, that lifts standards for all of us.”

That kind of change is possible, Dias said, by working together and with other unions

and progressive groups to establish Canada as a country “where young people can experience what it means to have opportunity, and where we treat our parents with the love and dignity they deserve. Where communities and jobs and sustainability trump profit and corporate rights. Where free collective bargaining is finally valued as a democratic human right that cannot be taken away by any government.”

Canadians have the right to expect good jobs with decent working conditions and benefits, as well as a union to fight for them and help ensure that they can provide their families with a good standard of living.

“This is why we are founding a new union today. This is what Unifor is here to do,” Dias said. **U**

Pollster says Unifor has a role for all Canadians

Canadian pollster and pundit Allan Gregg enthralled the delegates at the Unifor convention with his observations and analysis of the Harper government's war on reason and working families.

Gregg said despite the tactics of the Harper government there is still a role for unions to play.

"The hill you climb, while steep, can be breeched," said Gregg.

He urged the leaders and delegates of Unifor not to allow Harper to pit unions against the interests of Canadians.



Allan Gregg said unions help all Canadians.

"After this weekend the eyes of the nation will be on you. And if they like what they see, their hearts and minds will follow," Gregg told the cheering delegates.

In a wide-ranging and detailed speech, Gregg outlined the systematic way in which the Harper government has attacked institutions,

groups and agencies that Canadians have benefited from. He said the Tories create myths that pit Canadians against each other.

For instance, Conservatives argue that the middle class can't prosper unless there is "right to work" legislation — laws that are essentially anti-union. Gregg explained

that economies prosper when working people can buy things. He noted that around the world anywhere there are unions, there is a healthy middle class.

Gregg urged us to fight for Canada, where Canadians still believe in egalitarianism.

"What is good for Canada is good for the union movement." 

Community chapters a bold new initiative

Delegates to the founding convention of Unifor endorsed a new model of unionism by embracing the new union's unique plan to establish community chapters across Canada. "We are facing increasing unemployment and a rise in



Roxanne Dubois presented the community chapters paper.

precarious jobs," Roxanne Dubois, the Unifor staff member who is coordinating the community chapter program, told the delegates.

Delegates voted unanimously to adopt the policy paper, "Broadening Union Citizenship: Unifor's Members in Community Chapters."

Delegates spoke in favor of community chapters as a way to extend the benefits of unionism to all Canadians.

Dubois said community chapters could be formed in a number of different circumstances, including among freelance workers, contract or agency workers, homeworkers, workers in precarious jobs, the self-

employed and workers in unsuccessful union drives.

As an example, Dubois introduced freelance journalists, bike couriers and United Church clergy members attending the Unifor convention.

"We want to redefine how the public defines unions," Dubois said.

Most community chapters would be affiliated with a willing local, and would give members access to benefits, advocacy and training.

Gary Engler, vice-president of Local 2000 representing media workers in BC, said his local plans to set up a community chapter to represent digital media workers, including those developing games. 



Introduced as the Unifor National President's choice for Toronto Mayor, NDP MP Olivia Chow made a surprise visit to the Unifor Convention.



There was face painting, bubbles, balloons and more for children at the Labour Day parade.



Blackie and the Rodeo Kings played at Unifest, a big outdoor concert held in Nathan Phillips Square to end the Founding Unifor Convention.



Delegates lined up to debate Unifor's vision, organizing policy and community chapters plan.



Delegates listened carefully to the debates.



>> Thousands of CAW and CEP members rallied in downtown Toronto the day before the two unions merged to form Unifor.

In a rousing display of what Unifor will become, members marched in Toronto on Aug. 30 in support of Canadian telecommunications jobs.

Speakers Dave Coles, CEP National President; Ken Lewenza, CAW National President; Marc Rousseau, Local 6001; Michelle Arruda, President, Local 6004; and Dylan Gadwa, Local 2000, called on the federal government to stop giving preferential treatment to U.S. giants such as Verizon.

Less than a week later, Verizon announced that it was abandoning plans to come into Canada. 

Walsh: “Don’t make me come back”



Mary Walsh brought her brand of humour to send off the former CEP and CAW National Presidents.

A special guest was on hand to give the outgoing presidents of CAW and CEP a uniquely Canadian sendoff.

Mary Walsh — aka Marg Delahunty, Warrior Princess — bounded to the stage after a quick video of her greatest hits upstaging prime ministers, princes, mayors and musicians to take on former CAW National President Ken Lewenza and former CEP President Dave Coles.

Walsh, who is not to be interrupted and leaves her targets few options but to sit there and accept what’s happening, turned her comedic senses to the new union and the former

presidents of its two founding unions – much to the delight of all who were there.

She said challenges have a way of making people stand up for themselves.

“When we are screwed, we multiply,” she said. “We’re proving on this Labour Day weekend that there is strength in numbers.

She concluded with a warning.

“We need to find ways to come together for something better,” she said. “Don’t make me come back and smite you.” 